

There are sirens. Blue and red lights flash around the scene as men dressed in black and blue look around the pavement. Helmets and pieces of motorcycle are scattered around the empty, dimly lit street, now filled with the noise of vehicles and the chatter of people, along with the various clicking sounds coming from cameras taking pictures of the place. The place where it happened. The place where I first used my powers. I did something devastating; trails of blood are scattered around the broken motorcycle pieces, disfigured bodies caused by grazing down the pavement, pieces of metal protruding from them, all lifeless. They are all dead. Death that I have caused. It was a crime scene.

"Lad... Lad!!!"



A bold voice broke my attention as I looked up from the place where I was sitting. A middle-aged man dressed in a black uniform. I covered the blanket around me even more as I spoke up, "Ye-... Yes, Officer?"

"I am sorry you have to witness this, but what happened? Can you tell me?" the officer asked in a pleading voice.

I answered, "I... I just don't know... One second, I was leaving the junkyard, and the next, there were these bikers and the—"

"Easy... easy," he handed me a glass of water. "Calm down, kid... It's all fine... It's all over. You were the only one present here when we arrived, so we just wanted to know if you saw anything."

I was surprised to realize that I was the only one here. Where did Ahnaf and Kelly go? I looked around, but they were nowhere to be found. So, I replied, "I don't know... I saw them lying like this and... I remember waking up in this ambulance."

Then I heard the officers whispering to each other, "The vigilante must be near. Take a look around." He then turned towards me, "Alright, lad, just fill out these details in this form, and you are good to go."

I slowly left the scene with an escort car as I saw even more police cars showing up. Men with dogs were searching around the area, some of them barking at me. As the scene grew distant, I started to fall asleep.



It was 7:45 in the evening. Ahnaf could be seen holding Kelly by the shoulders, guiding her home. She was in a state of shock but managed to speak up, "Wha-... What happened b... back there? Where is... Eric?"

In a worried voice, Ahnaf replied, "I'm sorry, but I had to leave him there. I had no other choice. I only had time and strength to carry one person, and the police were closing in." He looked into her eyes. "So I chose you."

"And what happened to me? They... Those people, they... took me."  
She started to tear up.

Ahnaf responded, "Eric saved you. Nothing happened. He was there on time."

Kelly asked, "But how? Wasn't I on one of their bikes? Then how did he catch up?"

Ahnaf answered, "I don't know. I was just lying on the ground when it happened. I saw him running and running until he was just a blur. Maybe it was my eyes, but I don't know. I saw him turn into a blur."

Kelly, now able to walk on her own, placed her hand at the back of Ahnaf's head. "You okay? I remember seeing you bleed, but it doesn't look like anything happened here."

"Yes, I am fine," Ahnaf reassured her, then pointed towards the suburban house. "But you should be more worried about what you're gonna tell your parents about the time." He smiled at her a bit, then quietly left her, safe and sound in front of her house.

Kelly hesitated for a moment, then turned back to Ahnaf. "Thank you, Ahnaf. I don't know what I would have done without you."

Ahnaf nodded, "Just take care of yourself, Kelly. We'll figure this out together."



Kelly gave him a weak smile, "I hope so. Be safe, Ahnaf."

Ahnaf watched as Kelly entered her house, then turned and walked away, his mind racing with thoughts of the night's events.

Ahnaf reached his home around 9 PM. As soon as he stepped inside, his mom's voice echoed through the house. "Ahnaf! Where have you been? Do you have any idea what time it is?"

Ahnaf listened to every word she said with a smile on his face, which made her even more furious. "Why are you smiling? Do you think this is funny?" she demanded.

Ahnaf simply replied, "Because I am happy to see you, Mom."

His mom's anger softened as she saw the sincerity in his eyes. "What happened, Ahnaf? Why are you so late?"

Ahnaf took a deep breath, "Mom, I... I was in a situation. It was nothing special, and I thought I might not make it.. on time of course!. All I could think about was you. How I would long to see you"

Tears welled up in his mom's eyes as she pulled him into a tight embrace. "Oh, Ahnaf, you scared me. I don't know what I would do without you."

Ahnaf hugged her back, "I'm sorry, Mom. I promise I'll be more careful. I just want you to know how much you mean to me."





His mom held him close, "I love you, Ahnaf. Please, now go do your homework!"

Ahnaf nodded, "I will, Mom. Hahaha."

As he went upstairs into his room, he finally gave me a call. At that time, I was laying on my bed trying to piece up everything that happened to me that time, I picked up his call

"Hey Ahnaf," I answered.

"Eric, WHAT WAS THAT YOU DID!!!" He screamed in excitement.

"I don't know, man. One second I was running like I usually did, and the next I was fast enough to pass through those bikes!" I explained.

"That... that actually happened??? So, it wasn't just me! Dude, you were basically a blur!" Ahnaf replied.

"I know, right? Dude, we basically have superpowers now! Imagine what we could do with them!!!" I stated with equal excitement.

He replied in a cheeky voice, "I know exactly what we're gonna do."

Two weeks have passed since then. Things have started to return to normal—well, normal around us, but not exactly for us. No more threats from the loan sharks, no more bullies since they saw how Ahnaf beat up Fred. The weekdays are going pretty smoothly for the three of us. But on the weekends, Ahnaf and I test out our new abilities—his strength and my speed—while Kelly watches over us to make sure we don't go overboard. Her uncle owns a cabin in the nearby forest area, just a few miles away. We practice and hone our abilities there as much as we can since nobody wanders around that area.

Ahnaf and I are lying on the grass near the lake while Kelly sits beside us, making sandwiches. Over these days, we've learned a lot about our abilities.

Regarding Ahnaf, we've discovered that his injuries heal depending on their severity. Small ones like scratches and bruises take about a minute or two to heal, while larger ones like gunshot wounds or



fractures take about 15 to 45 minutes. However, this also depends on how serious Ahnaf is. As for his strength, he is now far stronger than before. He can lift an entire oak tree—not with ease, but he can do it nonetheless. His punches have become far more destructive; today, he managed to destroy a giant boulder with a single punch. Additionally, he can run much faster than an average athlete. The fastest he has run is 30 mph.



And about me? The fastest I've run so far is 75 mph. From what I've learned, not only am I physically fast, but I am also mentally fast. When I run at that speed, the world around me seems to slow down instead of speeding up. It's as if my brain starts processing information at an incredibly fast rate. This heightened perception allows me to react to obstacles and changes in my environment with precision and agility.



When I hit something at that speed, the power of my strike multiplies significantly. Last time, I punched a hole into one of the boulders with ease. It's not just about the speed; it's about the force generated by the momentum. The faster I move, the more powerful my strikes become.

Additionally, I've noticed that my reflexes have become almost instantaneous. I can dodge objects and attacks with minimal effort, and my coordination has improved dramatically. This heightened awareness and quick thinking also extend to my everyday life. I can solve problems faster, think on my feet, and make split-second decisions with clarity.

We don't know how both of us would fare against a real opponent, but we might have to hold back on our strikes, or we might accidentally hurt someone. As evening falls, all three of us leave on our bicycles, the cool breeze brushing against our faces.

"Hey Ahnaf!" I called out to him. "We've got our abilities figured out, but..."

Ahnaf replied, "But what?"

I answered, "Well, every superhero has a suit, right? To protect their identity and also to look cool, right!?"

"Oh yes!" He replied with excitement. "But how do we make one?"

"We'll figure something out... Right???" We both looked at Kelly with hopeful eyes.

Kelly sighed, "You guys, just because I'm a girl doesn't mean I know how to sew."

"Ughhh," we both groaned, looking at each other in disappointment. "Well, I guess Ahnaf and I will just have to make something on our own."

The sun was setting, casting a beautiful orange glow across the sky. As we neared my home, I turned to Ahnaf and asked, "What's your favorite color?"

He looked up at the sky, a smile spreading across his face, and answered, "Orange."





The moment felt magical, the sky reflecting the color of Ahnaf's favorite hue. It was as if the universe was aligning with our newfound purpose. We rode our bicycles with renewed determination, knowing that together, we could overcome any challenge that came our way.

Ahnaf cycled down his street, his heart pounding as he neared his house. The sight of men in grey suits sprinting out of his home and leaping into a muscle car sent a chill down his spine. The car roared

to life and sped away with a screech, leaving Ahnaf in a state of panic.

He dashed into the house, his mind racing with worry for his mom. To his surprise, she stood in the kitchen, unharmed, clutching a knife with a determined look on her face. Relief washed over him, but it was fleeting. The sound of hurried footsteps echoed from upstairs.

Without a second thought, Ahnaf bolted up the stairs, his senses heightened. He reached the top just in time to catch a glimpse of a shadowy figure slipping out of his room's window. The silhouette vanished into the night, leaving behind an eerie silence.



He quickly moved towards the window and the figure was nowhere to be seen. He then quickly ran down the stairs and hugged his mom tightly.

"MOM, are you okay?? What happened!!!!???" he asked

Ruvana answered in a worried tone "I... I am okay honey... Those men came barging in and started demanding money again.... then... then one of them started placing their dirty hands on ... me."



AhnaF now enraged "What!!! How da-"

Ruvana cuts him off "but then this man in a black costume, came in and started beating them up with some sticks in his hand and they ran off."

AhnaF then helps his mom to calm down and wash her face from the sink and made her sit on the couch. He took care of his mom that night as she was in a bit of a shock from the situation. They were now worried about their own safety in their own home.

That night, as AhnaF lay in bed, his mind raced with thoughts. He realized that he was no longer helpless. With his newfound powers, he had the ability to change his life and protect those he loved. He just needed to track down those men and teach them a lesson.

"Superheroes don't kill, right?" he thought to himself. "Even the Sentinel, as strong as he is, doesn't kill people."



He thought out loud, his voice taking on a darker tone, "Sure, I can't kill them, but who's to say I can't break a few bones and make sure they can't stand anymore so that they can't touch my mom again." A sinister smile crept across his face as he imagined the fear in their eyes.

Right at that moment, all he had to do was take a leap of faith, to become who he had always wanted to be since childhood. Not just a superhero, but a force of reckoning. He didn't need to be an exemplar of justice; he just needed to be someone who could protect his family when the situation arose.

The thought of his newfound power filled him with a sense of dark satisfaction. He would make those who threatened his loved ones regret ever crossing his path. With a steely resolve, Ahnaf embraced his purpose, ready to unleash his strength and ensure that no one would ever dare to harm his family again.

And then he stood up. He opened his wardrobe and took out an orange jacket and a face mask that covered him up to his nose. He wore his old jeans. Standing in front of the window, he took a deep breath and jumped.



He landed on the grass, feet wide apart, with one hand on the ground and the other stretched out to the side. Then he ran and ran, leaving the silent suburbs behind, leaving the hustle and bustle of the city behind. Under the dark night sky, he sped down towards the empty lane near the junkyard, his heart pounding with a mix of determination and a hint of darkness.

"Man, that was some heck of a day. Couldn't believe someone would do that to Luigi's gang," said one of them.



"I'm sure some maniacs from a rival gang did this," the other one answered.



"No way, bro. Nobody messes with Luigi and gets away. Poor bastard who did this to them. I saw Luigi meeting some gentlemen in grey suits back at his warehouse party just an hour ago an—"

Before he could finish, a blur of motion struck. The biker in front of him was hit with a powerful punch to the gut. The force of the blow sent him flying through the air, crashing into the wall with a

deafening crack. Pieces of bricks crumbled and fell alongside him as he slumped to the ground, gasping for breath.

The other biker, witnessing the brutal scene, was about to flee in fear when Ahnaf swiftly kicked him down, a sickening crack echoing through the alley. The biker screamed in agony,

"AAAAGGGGGHHHH DAMN YOU!!!" Tears welled up in his eyes as he looked up to see a figure in an orange jacket, wearing a mask, staring menacingly at him. It was Ahnaf.



"Wha... what do you want? Please don't kill me, I'll do anything," he pleaded, his voice trembling.

"Where is Luigi?" Ahnaf demanded in a strict, unwavering tone.

"You... You want Luigi, right? Yes, I know him. Tattooed guy with piercings all over his face? He's at the warehouse party, just a couple of blocks from here, I swear. Now leave me alone, please, I beg of you," the biker stammered, backing away and crawling with his uninjured leg.

Ahnafe turned back, and as he did, the biker slowly took out a pistol from his pocket and pointed it at Ahnaf. He pulled the trigger. BAM! The bullet hit Ahnaf, piercing through his chest and soaking his jacket with blood. He started bleeding and knelt in pain, clutching his chest.

The biker laughed maniacally, "Haha...hahahaha... YOU LITTLE SHIT!!! Not so tough now, huh? I'm calling my boys now. You're gonna DIE NOW!!!"

But then, something unexpected happened. The blood stopped flowing, and Ahnaf slowly stood up. He turned back to look at the biker, his eyes red with anger, veins bulging. Ahnaf began moving towards him, each step deliberate and menacing.

The biker's face twisted in terror as he tried to take another shot. His hands trembled, and his screams echoed through the alley.

In the distance, a cracking sound could be heard, followed by a scream. Then another crack, followed by another scream. The sounds continued, one after another, until they stopped altogether, leaving everything in eerie silence.

A couple of blocks away, there was a party inside an old warehouse. Loud rock music blared, and plenty of people in punk attire with dyed hair in various colors could be seen, busy drinking, taking pills, and dancing. All this could be seen by Ahnaf from the top of the warehouse ceiling as he tore up a hole.



Then, he jumped down, landing hard. As his feet touched the ground, the sheer force of his impact created a small crater around him. The force of his landing was so intense that it pushed people around him away, causing them to fall on top of each other.





He stood up without a scratch, as he saw a dozen leather jacket-wearing, beefed-up men running towards him with batons in hand. As one of them neared him, ready to strike, Ahnaf quickly ducked and moved behind him, delivering a powerful punch below his arm. The guard flew towards the bar, crashing into the bottles with a thunderous impact.

The next guard grabbed Ahnaf's right arm, and another grabbed his left. A third guard came in front, ready to hit him. But Ahnaf

clenched his fists and moved his arms towards each other, pulling both guards alongside him and crashing them hard into the third one. The force of the collision sent all three guards sprawling to the ground.

Another guard came running, but Ahnaf punched him right in the face, the cracking sound echoing as he fell. The next guard got kicked in the gut, flying across the room and slamming into the wall. Men who previously looked intimidating, all ripped in muscles and leather jackets, were now being flung left and right with tremendous force all around the warehouse.

Ahnaf then performed a spinning kick, knocking two guards off their feet simultaneously. He followed up with a swift elbow strike to another guard's jaw, sending him sprawling with a bone-jarring thud. As another guard charged at him, Ahnaf sidestepped and used the guard's momentum to throw him into a group of oncoming attackers, the impact scattering them like bowling pins.



One guard tried to tackle Ahnaf from behind, but Ahnaf flipped him over his shoulder, slamming him into the ground with earth-shaking force. He then grabbed a baton from a fallen guard and used it to block an incoming strike, countering with a swift jab to the attacker's ribs, the impact reverberating through the room.

Ahnaf continued his relentless assault, delivering a series of rapid punches and kicks, each move precise and powerful. He disarmed another guard, using the baton to sweep his legs out from under

him with a resounding crash. With a final, powerful uppercut, he sent the last guard crashing into a stack of crates, the wood splintering under the force.

Breathing heavily but unscathed, Ahnaf walked up the stairs, beating up every guard along the way. He reached a room overlooking the dance floor through a wide glass window, ready to confront whoever was behind this chaos.

He kicked the door open, and inside stood a man with tattoos all over his body and piercings on his lips, nose, and ears. It was Luigi. He looked at Ahnaf and grabbed the gun next to him. Just as he was about to shoot, Ahnaf dashed forward, dodging the shot and grabbing Luigi's hand. He looked at Luigi angrily, ready to clench his fist and break his arm, but suddenly, he was hit in the head from behind, startling him and pushing him away from Luigi.





When he looked back, he saw a man in a mask covering his face. The man had a bit of grey hair and wore a black costume with a bluish tint on some parts of his body. He looked just like the person his mom had described earlier. Ahnaf tried to punch the man, but he dodged with ease, moving to Ahnaf's right and delivering a swift punch to his chest. The man then slid back towards the wall as Ahnaf attempted to strike again, but missed. The man ran up the wall, jumping right over Ahnaf's head, landing behind him, and threw a nightstick at Ahnaf's head, causing a slight concussion.

Ahnaf struggled to keep his balance but quickly recovered and charged towards the man. The man in black was momentarily taken aback by Ahnaf's resilience but quickly regained his composure. He sidestepped Ahnaf's charge and executed a sweep kick, causing Ahnaf to fall face-first into the large glass window, which started to crack upon impact. The man threw another nightstick at the cracked window, shattering it and causing Ahnaf to fall down to the dance floor below.



Ahnaf landed hard but quickly got back on his feet. The man in black jumped down after him, landing gracefully. Ahnaf swung a powerful punch, but the man dodged it effortlessly, countering with a precise strike to Ahnaf's ribs. Ahnaf winced in pain but continued his assault, throwing a series of powerful punches and kicks. The man in black skillfully evaded each attack, using his agility and technique to stay one step ahead.

The man in black then executed a series of acrobatic moves, flipping over Ahnaf and landing behind him. He delivered a swift kick to Ahnaf's back, sending him stumbling forward. Ahnaf turned around, his eyes burning with determination, and charged again. The man in black met his charge head-on, using a combination of martial arts techniques to deflect Ahnaf's brute force.

Despite Ahnaf's incredible strength, the man in black's skill and precision proved to be too much. He moved with the grace and efficiency of a seasoned fighter, exploiting every opening in Ahnaf's attacks. With a final, powerful strike, the man in black sent Ahnaf crashing into a stack of crates.

Breathing heavily, Ahnaf struggled to get back on his feet. The man in black approached him, his eyes cold and calculating. He poked his fingers hard beside Ahnaf's ears, and Ahnaf's eyes slowly closed. With a snap, his world turned black.





There was the sound of cars speeding by, followed by the crashing of metal and continuous honking. The noise jolted Ahnaf awake, breathless and drenched in sweat. An intense, unusual warmth filled the room, becoming unbearable with each passing second. Outside, daylight seemed off—too orange, almost surreal. Maybe it was evening, but it felt wrong.

Ahnaf opened the window, and what he saw startled him. A crimson ball of light covered half the sky, and a strange humanoid figure

flew towards it. Could it be the Sentinel? He quickly opened his bedroom door to check on his mom downstairs, but stopped abruptly. There was nothing but emptiness—a black void with a distant pink light, as far away as the stars.

Behind him, his room began to burn. Flames consumed his computer, posters, bed, and photo album. With no other choice, he jumped into the void. As he fell, he heard a soothing, unfamiliar feminine voice.

"Let her go... Love is not worth the sacrifice."

Ahnaf screamed, "Where am I?! Who's Love?! What Sacrifice?!"

The void lit up in pink, and a figure appeared before him—the same figure from his dream, with pink eyes. It looked at him and spoke.

"Yours."

Ahnaf wakes up, strapped tightly to a chair. He scans the dimly lit room around him and sees Luigi strapped to a chair opposite him. Ahnaf tries to break free but feels dizzy and weak.

"Ah, you are awake," the man in the black costume spoke up, standing beside him with an injection. "Uh huh, don't even try. You've been injected with something that can sedate an entire elephant, and you've had two doses."

Ahnaf spoke, "Wha... What the hell is your problem, man? Why?"

"Why, you ask?" The man turned towards him. "Firstly, you got shot in the chest. A normal man would have died on the spot, but you stayed awake. Yes, I saw it all. I didn't intervene because I thought two junkies were fighting again. Secondly, I threw my nightstick at full force, and yet you kept standing. Can't blame me for being extra cautious, can you?"



Ahnaf replied, "Look... I don't know what you want... but I have nothing that I could give you..."

The man stated, "That's where you are wrong. You are something of a miracle! You've got actual superpowers like the Sentinel. It's not something I want from you." He moved towards Luigi, who was now tied up, and grabbed him by the neck. "It's about something that I could give you."

Ahnaf looked at him, "What are you offering?"

The man smiled, "Skills. Skills that you need to become an actual superhero. Don't get me wrong, you are strong. I mean, you destroyed all those jacked-up dudes with no sweat, but you have no tactics, no moves. It's good against these..." He slapped Luigi, causing him to scream in pain. "Back-alley junkies, but against an actual opponent like me, and trust me, there are hundreds more like me, you are nothing since all you know is to throw a punch."

Ahnaf slowly regained consciousness, his vision clearing as he clenched his fists. "And? I know you aren't doing this for free. What do you want in return?"

With a determined glare, Ahnaf moved behind Luigi's chair and pressed a hidden switch. Luigi's body convulsed as electricity surged through him. The man standing before Ahnaf stepped closer, extending his hand.

"The end of the Heartlands."



In that moment, Ahnaf's strength surged back. He broke free from the straps and stood tall, facing the man. They locked eyes, a silent understanding passing between them. Ahnaf extended his hand, and they shook firmly.

"You've been at this for a long time," Ahnaf said, his voice steady.  
"What do they call you?"

The man smiled, a hint of darkness in his eyes. "Mid-Nite."



